

fighter for workplace safety laws, for raising the minimum wage, and for elderly nutrition programs. When she believed that a cause was just, nothing could stop her. She was relentless. I remember sitting in these closed-door Democratic caucus meetings with her, and she would introduce a bill at the beginning of the session, usually a bill way ahead of its time, expanding workers' rights or increasing supports for the elderly. And every week—every week—she would argue the case, and she wouldn't stop talking until she had persuaded at least one additional State senator in the room to support her bill.

At the beginning of the session, senate leaders would tell her: "No, Edith, we are not doing that bill this year," or "No, we just can't afford it." And she just wouldn't listen. She never saw a stop sign.

I have never seen anybody like this. She never saw a stop sign when there was something worthwhile to be done for the vulnerable. She would bring that bill up over and over and over again, and, eventually, she would just wear everybody down, and she would get it done.

She was in her seventies when I met her, and she had twice as much energy and stamina as I did. She was a force of nature. The last major bill she passed, she was 86 years old. It was a landmark piece of legislation granting home care workers the ability to organize and collectively bargain. She fought for the bill's uncertain passage all year, and then she stood on her feet for 6 hours, defending it in a marathon Senate debate.

She did all this with her trademark wide grin, smile, her big laugh. She was a consummate pain in the ass, but everybody loved her because, although she worked on issues of such gravity and seriousness and controversy, she brought such transparent, outward joy to her work. She knew she was a pain, and she chuckled when people tried to push her aside because she just knew she was going to outlast them.

I learned so much from her. She took me under her wing. She treated me so kindly when I came to the Senate as a naive 29-year-old. She believed in me, and her confidence meant the world to me.

Her energy and her enthusiasm for the causes she worked on gave me energy and enthusiasm for the things that mattered to me.

I think about her a lot when I work on the issue of gun violence. It wasn't one of the issues that drove Edith, but, you know, some days, it is hard to keep going on an issue like this when so little progress is being made nationally. But then I think of Edith, who never ever gave up when a thing was the right thing to do, in her mind, and her memory will keep me going, and I know it will keep a lot of other people going in Connecticut who knew her.

Longtime political reporter Mark Pazniokas writes for the Connecticut Mirror. He wrote a beautiful story

about Edith this week, and I will close with what he wrote:

[Edith] Prague did not go gentle, anywhere. She lived Dylan Thomas's poetry, his belief that "old age should burn and rave at close of day." She fought governors, fellow lawmakers, and, most consistently, the notion of retirement, a status finally imposed on her by a confluence of strokes and concerns of family and physician.

"My only choice is to retire or drop dead. I have to retire. Believe me, I don't like it," Prague said when she left state employment as the 88-year-old commissioner of aging in 2014. "Lots of people look forward to retirement," she said, "but I'm not one of them."

Edith was one of a kind, and the impact she left on people who knew her, like me, and the people who never met her, like those she fought for, is indelible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

#### JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, as we are now in December and the year is winding down, I am reflecting on one of the first actions, one of the first decisions I made when I joined the Senate back in January, and that was a decision to establish a judicial evaluation commission with folks back in California, professionals who would help me find, vet, and recommend candidates to President Biden to serve on California's Federal courts.

Usually when the general public thinks about Federal courts, they tend to only think about the Supreme Court, but, as those who work in this body know, the vast majority of Federal cases—indeed, more than 99 percent of all Federal cases—are decided at the district court or circuit court level. So, as we go about our work to strengthen the justice system in America, I think it is important that we give proper attention and support to district and circuit courts.

Fast-forward to today and the items that we are working on literally as we speak. Nominees to every level of the Federal judiciary by the prior administration—let me put it mildly here. We are far from diverse, far from representative of our Nation, and as a result, the Federal courts and those who sit on the Federal bench do not reflect the diverse, vibrant America that it serves. And I am not just talking about gender. I am not just talking about race and ethnicity. For too long, the bench of our Federal courts has been dominated by corporate lawyers and former prosecutors.

Now, prosecutors and corporate lawyers do contribute valuable and important expertise to the Federal judiciary. That is why I have supported the nomination of some this year. But the judiciary also needs the knowledge and perspective of legal professionals who have taken different paths. I am talking about public defenders, who uphold our constitutional commitment that every person deserves fair representation and due process. I am talking about public interest lawyers, who de-

fend fundamental rights and the rule of law. I am talking about consumer and voting rights lawyers, labor and immigration lawyers, and local government lawyers, who serve diverse clients and advocate for different interests and bring critical insights on how working-class Americans interact with the law.

We need all these perspectives in order to rebalance our Federal courts and hopefully in the process rebuild and reaffirm public confidence in the fairness of their rulings. Our country is stronger and fairer when every level of our government reflects the voices and the experiences of all Americans—not just the privileged, not just the powerful.

A Federal bench that includes more voices can better provide justice for all. That is why, over the course of the past year, I have worked with my commission that I established back in January—which, by the way, is 70 percent attorneys of color and a majority women, and I am proud to share that—along with Senator FEINSTEIN and President Biden, to find, to nominate, and to support a new generation of qualified, outstanding, and professionally diverse Federal judges—a Federal bench that is diverse in every sense of the word.

As a result of these efforts and pending confirmation votes that I hope will soon occur, I am so proud that California's district court bench will soon include Maame Frimpong, a proud daughter and wife of immigrants from Ghana, who used her law degree to fight for consumers and strengthen global democracy.

It will soon include Judge Jennifer Thurston, who earned her law degree as a night student while raising a family and spent a decade serving in county government.

It will soon include Judge Jinsook Ohta, an immigrant from South Korea, who spent nearly 10 years of her career helping to prosecute unfair business practices and to protect consumers from fraud.

It will soon include Judge Linda Lopez, who spent more than 10 years as a public defender in San Diego.

It will soon include Judge Hernan Vera, the son of Argentine immigrants, who spent a decade fighting for the disadvantaged and leading the Nation's largest pro bono law firm.

In addition, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals now includes Judge Lucy Koh, whom we recently confirmed, an expert litigator of intellectual property cases and the first Korean-American woman to serve on the Federal circuit court.

The Ninth Circuit will also soon include Justice Gabriel Sanchez, the proud son of a single mother from Mexico, who has earned wide recognition as a public servant and an appellate judge on California's court of appeal.

It will soon include Judge Holly Thomas, the granddaughter of sharecroppers, who has made a career of fighting for the civil rights of all Americans.

I celebrate each of these outstanding nominees, and I thank them for their service to this country. I urge their swift confirmation.

Now, of course, we will still have a long way to go and much more work to do, but these confirmations, colleagues, represent a big step in the right direction.

I am proud of the work we have done so far to diversify the Federal bench, and I am committed to keeping up the momentum that we have started in that critical mission in 2022.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the Senate will soon vote on 10 judicial nominees—nine for district courts and one for the Ninth Circuit appeals court—as we continue the critical work of restoring balance to our Federal judiciary.

Before briefly speaking on their records, I want to offer a few broad observations. I continue to be impressed by the experience, qualifications, and professional diversity that we see among President Biden's judicial nominees.

Looking at these 10 in particular: Nine currently serve as either State court or Federal magistrate judges; three have worked for county or State governments; two have previously served as Federal public defenders; one has served as a Federal prosecutor, while another has worked in various roles at the Justice Department; one has worked for a leading civil rights organization; and several have worked in private legal practice.

The judiciary is stronger when our judges come from an array of professional backgrounds, including those that have been historically underrepresented on the bench. Furthermore, all 10 of these nominees are highly qualified, with broad experience and distinguished records. Each of them has demonstrated their commitment to impartiality and evenhandedness. And they will be ready upon confirmation to fully dedicate themselves to the demands of the bench.

First is Judge Linda Lopez, nominated to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. For the past 3 years, Judge Lopez has served as a magistrate judge in the Southern District of California, where she has presided over seven bench trials. Prior to her appointment, Judge Lopez spent 25 years as a criminal defense attorney, first in private practice and then as a Federal public defender for more than a decade. During this time, she appeared in court frequently and tried 11 jury trials.

With such extensive trial experience, both on and off the bench, it is no surprise that Judge Lopez received a unanimous rating of "well qualified" from the American Bar Association. She has the strong support not only of her home State Senators—Senators FEINSTEIN and PADILLA—but also of top Federal prosecutors in the Southern District of California, including the

Deputy U.S. Attorney and Criminal Division Chief.

We will also vote on Judge Jinsook Ohta's nomination to the Southern District of California. Judge Ohta is currently a judge on the San Diego Superior Court, where she handles family law cases involving domestic violence, child custody, and child support—among many other issues.

Prior to assuming the bench, Judge Ohta spent nearly a decade with the consumer protection section of the California Attorney General's Office. In this role, she handled major cases involving healthcare fraud, illegal robocalls—and oversaw an investigation into Facebook's violations of consumer privacy rights.

Judge Ohta has been rated "well qualified" by the ABA, and she has the strong support of Senators FEINSTEIN and PADILLA, her home State Senators.

Judge Ohta's family immigrated to the United States from South Korea when she was young, and she grew up in New York City before attending Yale University and New York University School of Law. If confirmed, Judge Ohta would be the first Asian-American woman to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. Judge Ohta's wide-ranging legal experience makes her exceptionally well qualified to be a district court judge.

Next is David Urias, nominated to the District of New Mexico. Mr. Urias is a highly skilled litigator who is well versed in a number of practice areas, including criminal law, civil rights law, election law, and immigration. He also has experience representing a broad range of clients, from families of victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to hedge fund managers, to plaintiffs from low-income backgrounds.

In addition to having the strong support of his home State Senators—Senators HEINRICH and LUJÁN—Mr. Urias has been rated unanimously "well qualified" by the ABA. Given Mr. Urias's broad expertise and his experience representing a wide range of clients, he understands the importance of ensuring that every voice is fairly heard in our Nation's courts.

Next is Judge Maame Frimpong, nominated to the Central District of California. Judge Frimpong currently serves as a Superior Court judge in Los Angeles County. During her time on the Superior Court, she has presided over approximately 30 jury trials and thousands of hearings in misdemeanor and felony matters. In this role, Judge Frimpong has demonstrated the acumen and temperament that is required of our Nation's judges. And she is yet another example of both the professional and demographic diversity that President Biden's nominees are adding to our Federal courts.

The ABA has unanimously rated Judge Frimpong "well qualified" to serve as a district court judge. Judge Frimpong has the strong support of her home State Senators—Senators FEIN-

STEIN and PADILLA—and she has my support as well.

We also will consider Judge Jane Beckering's nomination to the Western District of Michigan. Judge Beckering has served as a judge on the Michigan Court of Appeals since 2007. Prior to assuming the bench, she spent 17 years as a litigator in private practice, where she appeared regularly in both State and Federal courts and tried three jury trials to verdict.

In reviewing her record, I am particularly impressed by Judge Beckering's judicial approach. She has stated, "My judicial philosophy is that judges should take off their partisan hats when they sit on the bench and treat all comers fairly and impartially . . . they should make their rulings based on the rule of law, not on a political agenda."

That is exactly the perspective we should be looking for in nominees to the Federal bench. Judge Beckering received a unanimous "well qualified" rating from the ABA and has the strong support of her home State Senators, Senators STABENOW and PETERS.

Next is Judge Shalina Kumar for the Eastern District of Michigan. Judge Kumar has served on the Sixth Judicial Circuit for Oakland County, MI, since 2007. She is currently the chief judge on this court—the second largest trial court in Michigan—and served in this role on a temporary basis beginning in 2010, 8 years before her official appointment. Over the past 14 years, she has presided over more than 10,000 cases and approximately 100 jury or bench trials on civil, criminal, and juvenile matters. Before joining the bench, Judge Kumar was a skilled litigator.

Given her long and distinguished career as a State court judge and her litigation experience, it is unsurprising that Judge Kumar received a unanimous rating of "well qualified" from the American Bar Association. She likewise has the strong support of Senators STABENOW and PETERS. Once confirmed, she will also be the first Federal judge of South Asian descent to serve in Michigan.

We will also vote on Judge Jennifer Thurston's nomination to the Eastern District of California. Since 2009, Judge Thurston has served as a magistrate judge for the Eastern District of California. And last year, she was elevated to the position of chief magistrate judge. She has presided over at least 30 trials and 400 bench trials, and she has issued hundreds of judgments involving a range of issues, including civil rights, voting rights, employment discrimination, and criminal cases.

Given Judge Thurston's experience as a long-time jurist, she will be ready from day one to take on the challenges of the Eastern District of California, which has one of the highest caseloads in the country. Judge Thurston was rated unanimously "well qualified" by the American Bar Association. And she has the strong support of her home State Senators, Senators FEINSTEIN and PADILLA.

We will also be voting on Judge Kate Menendez's nomination to the District of Minnesota. Judge Menendez has served the District of Minnesota as a Federal magistrate judge since 2016. She was appointed to that role by the district's sitting Federal judges, a reflection of Judge Menendez's record, qualifications, and dedication to impartiality.

Before assuming the bench, Judge Menendez served for nearly two decades as a Federal public defender, gaining considerable trial and appellate experience. Importantly, she has demonstrated that she understands the difference between the role of an advocate and that of a judge. She received a unanimous rating of "well qualified" from the American Bar Association and has the strong support of Senators KLOBUCHAR and SMITH.

We will also consider the nomination of Judge Mary Katherine Dimke for the Eastern District of Washington. For nearly 6 years, Judge Dimke has served as a U.S. magistrate judge in the Eastern District of Washington, based in Yakima, WA. In this role, Judge Dimke has presided over hundreds of matters, including approximately 400 civil cases that have gone to verdict or judgment.

Prior to assuming the bench, Judge Dimke, a first-generation college graduate, spent her legal career as a Federal prosecutor. During this time, she prosecuted a wide range of crimes, with a particular focus on fraud and complex financial crimes. The ABA has unanimously rated Judge Dimke "well qualified" to serve as a district court judge, and she has the strong support of her home State Senators, Senators MURRAY and CANTWELL.

Finally, we have Judge Gabriel Sanchez, nominated to a California seat on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Judge Sanchez is an experienced litigator and appellate jurist with a proven track record of impartial, evenhanded decision-making.

He received his undergraduate and law degrees from Yale and a master's degree from Cambridge University. After graduating, he clerked for Judge Richard A. Paez on the Ninth Circuit. Judge Sanchez worked as a civil litigator in private practice for 5 years before serving in the California State government, where he advised then-Governor Jerry Brown on litigation, legislation, appointments, and various policy measures, including criminal justice reform.

For example, he helped California develop and implement a response to a 2011 Supreme Court holding ordering the State to reduce its prison population. He served admirably to ensure California met its constitutional obligations while also prioritizing public safety. In 2018, Judge Sanchez was appointed to serve on the California Court of Appeal, First Appellate District. The court has appellate jurisdiction over virtually all final judgments and orders issued by 12 counties in California.

During his time on the bench, Judge Sanchez has filed or joined in nearly 500 opinions in cases almost evenly split between civil and criminal matters. So his judicial experience has been broad and varied. Judge Sanchez also has the strong support of his home State Senators—Senators FEINSTEIN and PADILLA—and was rated unanimously "well qualified" by the ABA. He is an exceptional nominee with impeccable credentials, and his evenhanded approach to justice will serve him well on the Ninth Circuit.

I urge all of my colleagues to support these outstanding judicial nominees. Every one of them has been rated "well qualified" by the American Bar Association. They will bring much-needed professional and demographic diversity to the bench. They will be impartial and evenhanded in the administration of justice. And they will always be faithful to the rule of law.

#### NOMINATION OF MARY KATHERINE DIMKE

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I urge my colleagues to confirm Judge Kit Dimke for a district court vacancy in the Eastern District of Washington.

To begin, I want to thank President Biden for nominating Judge Dimke for this position at my strong recommendation. At the start of this Congress, there were six Federal district court vacancies in Washington State—six. More than half the Federal bench in Washington State was empty. Those vacancies put a huge strain on our Federal courts, but thanks to the quick work of this Senate with Judge Dimke's confirmation, there will be just two, with another nominee voted out of committee just yesterday.

We have confirmed more than 30 circuit and district judges to lifetime appointments and I could not be prouder that, once we confirm Judge Dimke, four of them will serve Washington State. In this Congress, we have sent a clear message that the judicial system belongs to the American people, and it should work for all of the American people, not just the powerful and well-connected.

We are delivering on that commitment by appointing Federal judges who reflect the diversity of our communities and who bring important professional diversity that has been missing from our courts for too long. Just this Congress, we have confirmed to the Federal bench in my State Lauren King, a respected Tribal law expert and Washington State's first Native American Federal judge; Tana Lin, a civil rights lawyer, the first former public defender, and the first Asian-American Federal judge in my home State; David Estudillo, the son of immigrants, a respected State court judge, and a former immigration attorney. And soon, I hope this Senate will vote to confirm Judge Kit Dimke.

Judge Dimke is currently a Federal magistrate judge for the Eastern District of Washington. She knows the current judges and the lay of the land well, having served in that role since

2016, and is a highly respected judicial colleague. Given her current role, she has meaningful experience in both criminal and civil Federal litigation.

Judge Dimke's entire career has been in public service; she previously worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in both the Eastern and Western Districts of Washington. A native of Washington State, she grew up in rural Asotin County as the child of a cattle ranger and lumber mill owner; she knows Eastern Washington. Judge Dimke attended the Running Start program at Walla Walla Community College in high school and went on to obtain her undergraduate degree from Pepperdine University and law degree from Vanderbilt. She is someone with a proven track record who is committed to improving access to the court and will look for ways for the court to work equitably for all participants and for each voice to be heard.

Judge Dimke has already demonstrated that commitment as a magistrate judge, having worked to expand the court's mediation services, improved and diversified the court's indigent defense services, and more quickly resolved one of the top areas of litigation that the Eastern District sees—Social Security disability appeals. She participates in the court's Judicial Institute, volunteering to judge the court's civics competitions for students. And she is actively engaged in the court's external outreach regarding the crisis missing and murdered Native American and Indigenous women, a significant and serious problem facing Tribal communities in Washington State.

Bottom line, Judge Dimke is qualified to become a Federal district court judge and will make an excellent addition to the Federal bench from the Spokane Courthouse. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm her today.

#### VOTE ON LOPEZ NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Lopez nomination?

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSOFF), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from West